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ABSTRACT

A survey of 89 two- and four-year colleges in the Western and Southwestern United States was conducted to provide an overview of Library Media Technical Assistant (LMTA) education programs in those sections of the country. Each of the target institutions was identified by the Guidance Information System or the "Ferguson Guide to Two-Year College Programs for Technicians and Specialists" as having LMTA programs. Respondents were asked to indicate the terminal or non-terminal status of their programs and to provide information concerning articulation, curriculum content, job placement, the type of libraries hiring their graduates, and the demographic make-up of their students. Major findings, based on a 68% response rate, indicate that none of the four-year colleges and only 40% of the two-year colleges still offer LMTA curricula. The vast majority (92%) of the students enrolled in these programs were women, and the average faculty/student ratio was 1 to 27. Most (90%) of the LMTA programs led to a terminal degree, and the most popular courses were Introduction to Libraries, Library Resources, and Audio Visual Materials. Responses concerning job placement indicate that LMTA's were most likely to find employment in public or school libraries. The survey report compares findings with data and standards from the American Library Association. The questionnaire is appended. (JP)

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Library Media Technical Assistant Education in the Southwestern and Western United States

A Survey

by

Rebecca R. Phillips

May 1979

JC 790 602

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

This survey was conducted to provide an overview of Library Technical Assistant/Library Media Technical Assistant (LMTA) education programs in the Western and Southwestern United States. These educational programs were examined demographically and academically in terms of terminal and non-terminal programs, articulation, curriculum, job placement and types of libraries employing LMTA's.

"Library Technical Assistants were a new class of library employee, for whom educational programs were developed in the 1950's and 1960's. The American Library Association encouraged the development of these educational programs, many of which are in junior and community colleges." (Lewis)

Upon certification or graduation, the LMTA should be able to assist librarians in both technical and public services through the preparation of materials for readers' use; performance of routine tasks involved in purchasing and processing library materials; maintenance and operation of audiovisual and data processing equipment; answering questions about library services; and simple factfinding in basic reference sources for patrons.

"Junior and community college programs usually lead to an Associate of Arts (AA) degree in library technology and include one year of liberal arts courses and a year of library-related study." Two other types of LMTA education are available. They are one year certificate programs, usually offered by junior or community colleges; and associate degrees offered by four-year

institutions.

The training and education received in these programs generally correspond to the "Criteria for Programs to Prepare Library/Media Technical Assistants" of the American Library Association.

The prospect for employment upon completion of the LMTA education varies around the country. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics the number of LMTA's is expected to increase faster than the average for all occupations through the mid-1980's. However, the demand for, and hence the employment of, LMTA's will depend on expansion of library services and the growth in population and school and college enrollment. Currently the prospects based on these factors are not promising considering that enrollments are generally dropping.

Overall, there remains a felt need for Library Media Technical Assistants. This is supported by the revised and updated "Criteria" adopted by the Standing Committee on Library Education January 1979. This overview will provide an update of the status of LMTA programs in the Western and Southwestern United States as of Spring 1979.

II. METHOD AND RESPONSE

Two primary resources were used to compile a list of colleges offering associate or certificate programs in library technology. One was the Guidance Information System (GIS*) a data base of college, occupational and career information produced by Time Share/Houghton Mifflin and updated annually. The search algorithm for the GIS list of LMTA programs contained the following elements: two or four year colleges, offering certification and/or associate degrees in library science in the West and Southwest. The GIS geographic definitions were accepted for the survey. States in the West are Hawaii, Washington, Oregon, Nevada and California. Southwestern states include Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona.

The second resource used was the Ferguson Guide to Two-Year College Programs for Technicians and Specialists, published in 1971. This tool provided schools not in the GIS printout, as well as a perspective on continued and discontinued LMTA programs during the past eight years.

A mailed questionnaire was used to gather data for this report. It was sent along with a cover letter and a stamped, addressed envelope for returning the completed questionnaire to eighty-nine (89) institutions. (see Appendices 3 & 4). Sixty-one (61) questionnaires were returned for a 68% response rate. One response was discarded because the identification number was removed so

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*Time Share, 630 Oakwood Avenue, West Hartford, CT 06110

it could not be classified with either two or four year colleges. Consequently all percentages are based on six (60) responses.

	Colleges Surveyed	Colleges Responding	Response Rate
Two year	65	50	77%
Four year	23	10	43%
TOTAL	88	60	68%

Four Year Colleges - Only one of the ten responding four year institutions actually offered a two year or associate degree in library technology. However, that program is being phased out with the "last interns doing their practicum in Summer 1979." Consequently none of the four year college responses were relevant to this study.

Two Year Colleges - This group of responses can easily be divided into two sections. Of the fifty (50) responses thirty (30) or 60% no longer have library technology programs. A variety of reasons were provided by the institutions for no longer offering library technology education (see Appendix 5). However, most or 73% did not say why there is no longer a program.

The remaining twenty (20) responses, 40% are from two year colleges offering some form of library technology education. The eighteen question survey was answered as follows. (NA = did not answer.)

1. (name and phone number of respondent and/or program director)
2. Students currently enrolled in the program: NA - 1

		#	%		#	%	Total	
Full-time	Male	17	12%	Female	130	88%	Male	8%
Part-time	Male	28	4%	Female	671	96%	Female	92%

		#	%		#	%
5.	Program leads to terminal degree:	yes	18 - 90%	no	2 - 10%	

6. Hours of course work required for completion: (The responses fell into two clusters, 15-30 credit hours or "20s" and 60-65 credit hours or "60s") NA-2

   "20's" # = 8 (44%)

   "60's" # = 10 (56%)

7 & 8. Library technology courses offered, including internship:

	#	%
Introduction to Libraries	15	75
Library Resources	16	80
AV/Media	18	90
Library Technical Services	18	90
Library Public Services	16	80
Technicians in the Library	3	15
Federal, State & Local Publications	1	5
Internship	15	75

9. If not a terminal degree program to what degrees do library technology courses apply: 30% (6) of the respondents said their programs, both terminal and non-terminal, apply to Associate of Arts degrees.

10. Articulate with advanced programs: yes # = 4 (20%); no # = 17 (80%) One colleges offers an AA degree which is accepted as transfer by the state college/university system.

11. Courses held in the late afternoon or evening: yes # = 19 (95%); no # = 1 (5%)

12. Type of library students best prepared to work in:

    Highest to lowest: all - 10; schools - 8; public - 7; academic - 3; special - 1; NA - 1

13. Credit for work experience granted by :

    program: yes # = 13 (68%); no # = 6 (32%)

    institution: yes # = 13 (68%); no # = 6 (32%)

    NA - 1

14. Success rate (%) of LMTA graduates finding jobs in libraries:

    10% #=1 (5.3%); 20% #=1 (5.3%); 40% #=1(5.3%); 60% #=3 (17%)

    80% #=10 (56%); 100% #=2 (11%) NA - 2

15. Libraries in which LTMA's find employment: 1 to 5, 1=most, 5=least

    public - 2.2; school - 2.4; other 2.5; academic - 2.9; special - 3

    NA - 2

16. Average length of time library technology programs operating:

    12 years NA - 1

17. Primarily continuing education or entry level program:

    continuing education # = 3 (15%); entry level # = 7 (35%);

    both # = 10 (50%).

18. Additional comments are found in Appendix #6.

III. INTERPRETATION & CONCLUSIONS

The breakdown by gender shows a predominantly female enrollment in LMTA programs. This is similar to the library profession in which full-time employees are 83.2% female and 16.8% male; and part-time employees are 90.5% female and 9.5% male. (The Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information, 1978).

The average age of LMTA students is close to that of other community college students, 27 years old. (American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, 1978).

The average faculty/student ratio was figured without the ratio reported from one college of 1/108. Only one course is taught per semester at this institution which indicates that not all 108 students are enrolled at one time and that one faculty members teaches that single class each term. The average ratio reported (1/22) is close to the average faculty/student ratio for higher education of 1/17.2. (Yearbook of Higher Education, 1978-1979)

The questions of hours of course work (which meant credit hours), terminal degree, transferability, and articulation with advanced degree programs need to be considered together due to the lack of agreement among the figures for those items. The complication stems from some institutions considering the library technology portion of an AA degree a certificated termination point while others do not. There are also some institutions which offer only certificate programs (15-30 credits, one year). However, since these two options are not specifically indicated on the questionnaire it would be speculation to say how many of

of the twenty respondents offer both types. Apparently 44% offer just the brief program. The two respondents indicating non-terminal programs were those whose courses apply only to an AA.

There are two types of articulation and transferability evident in the LMTA programs. In one type the library technology courses and consequently some certificates are applicable to an Associate of Arts degree. The other type of articulation is the applicability of the AA toward a baccalaureate degree.

A final comment of applicability of community college LMTA credits is from the American Library Association's (ALA) brochure "Library Technical Assistant." "You should also be aware that community college LTA credit courses are not necessarily applicable toward a professional (Master's) degree in library science."

It is interesting that 56% of the LMTA programs are part of the general education program of an Associate degree in apparent contradiction of the 1970 Statement of Policy adopted by the Council of the ALA, "Library Education and Personnel Utilization," which reads that "a Library Technical Assistant is a person with certain specifically library-related skills ... the performance of whose duties seldom requires a background in education." (p.4) Yet, the ALA statement contains the germ of self-contradiction as it proceeds to state that "emphasis in the two-year Technical Assistant programs should be more on skills training than on general library concepts and procedures. In many cases it would be better from the standpoint of the student to pursue more broadly-based vocational courses which will teach technical skills applicable in a variety of job situations rather than those limited

solely to the library setting." (Ibid., p. 6)

Wading through the semantics then, we find a concordance between the ALA and LMTA programs in that in the cases where the entire curriculum or course list was provided in the survey response, for an AA degree with a Library Technology major, general courses were required. These include humanities, English, composition/communications, science, history, political science and data processing.

A comparison between the ALA's outline of "Library/Media Technical Courses" (see Appendix 2) and the course topic areas listed in response to question #7 reveals that the recommended subject areas are offered by 80-90% of the responding colleges as follows:

I.	Introduction to field and types and forms of materials	Library resources, introduction to libraries, AV/Media - 81.6%
II.	Support operations for technical services	Library technical services -90%
III.	Support operations for public services	Library public services - 80%
IV.	Practicum and seminar	Internship - 75%

This is a strong correlation that indicates adherence to ALA recommendations. Presumably these courses meet the needs of the student as perceived by educators, the market place, and students themselves.

Other areas of confusion or inconsistency of response centered around the questions regarding placement success and whether the program is continuing education or entry level. A conundrum developed when several institutions considered their already employed students in their placement rates. The apparently

did this by considering employed students as entry level or beginners rather than acknowledging that they had reentered the academic world as continuing education students. This indicates a prejudicial view of continuing education below the baccalaureate level. Certificate and associate degree programs are not seen as continuing education at all. This is even more ironic considering that 68% of the responding institutions offer credit for experience and 75% use on the job training.

Indeed if it were not for the continuing education aspect of library technology programs many schools would find that they could not afford to offer this type of education at all. The response to a tight job market in an era of fiscal retrenchment seems to be program cancellation. However, there are alternatives. One program being evaluated due to "little job market for graduates" and "Proposition 13" is being revised from entry level to one which provides "for open entry-exit and will emphasize more classes for employed library and media people." Also permanent cancellation is not always necessary. Another program was in operation from 1969 to 1973, then resumed in 1975 to date.

The process of evaluation, change, cancellation and possible resumption suggests a responsiveness to the local community and library job market. This observation is strengthened by one respondent's comment, "our local public library has a career-ladder program and is upgrading employees by having them take our classes."*

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*This is one of many suggestions, ideas, recommendations and problems identified by the respondents. Other approaches to program improvement are listed in Appendix 6.

It would seem then that there is a place in education for library technology education because there is a place in libraries for library technical assistants. It is equally evident that the viability of the LMTA rests in large part on his or her ability to work in the fast paced work of information delivery in today's library. Hence the viability of library technology education rests in its ability to give its students the skills and continuing education to keep them current in the market place.

APPENDICES 1,2 & 3 were deleted due to irreproducibility

211 Walter NE
Albuquerque, NM 87102
February 10, 1978

Dear

The purpose of this survey is to arrive at an overview of library technology education in the Western United States. It is written to derive specific demographic and academic information regarding terminal and non-terminal programs, articulation with other and advanced educational programs, curriculum, placement, and types of libraries employing library technicians.

Margaret Myers, Executive Secretary of the American Library Association's Library Education Division has offered suggestions on the survey and advised that a similar survey was completed for the Northeastern United States in 1975.

A complete copy of the results and report will be sent to you.

A stamped, addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience in returning the completed form.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely.

Rebecca R. Phillips

211 Walter NE
Albuquerque, NM 87102
February 10, 1978

Dear

The purpose of this survey is to arrive at an overview of library technology education in the Southwestern United States. It is written to derive specific demographic and academic information regarding terminal and non-terminal programs, articulation with other and advanced educational programs, curriculum, placement and the types of libraries employing library technicians.

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A stamped, addressed envelope is enclosed for tour convenience in returning the completed form.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Rebecca R. Phillips

Please return by April 1, 1979

LIBRARY TECHNICIAN EDUCATION

1. Who is in charge of your library technology program?

   name_____. phone_____

2. How many students are currently enrolled in your program?

   full-time M_____ F_____. part-time M_____ F_____

3. What is the average age of students enrolled in your program?_____

4. What is the approximate faculty/student ratio in your program?_____

5. Does your program lead to a terminal degree? yes no

6. How may hours of course work are required for completion of your program?_____

7. Please list the library technology courses offered by your institution.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

8. Does yourprogram offer internships, practicums or some other form of experiential learning? yes no If yes, please describe_____

   _____

   _____

9. If this is not a terminal program to what degrees do the library technology courses apply?_____

   _____

   _____

10. Does your program articulate with advanced degree programs? yes no

    If yes, with which institutions does your program articulate? _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

11. Are any library technology courses held in the late afternoon or evening? yes n

12. Your program best prepares students for work in: academic; public; school; special; or other_____libraries.

13. Does your program and/or institution grant credit for work experience?

    program yes no institution yes no

14. What is the success rate (%) of students from your library technology program in finding jobs in library services? 10% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

15. In what types of libraries are graduates finding employment? Please rate 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. 1=most; 5=least.

    academic___; public___; school___; special___; or other_____

16. How long has your library technology program been operating?_____

17. Do you consider yours primarily a continuing education program for practitioners or an entry level program?

    continuing education_____ entry level_____

18. Any additional comments on your program would be appreciated. Please feel free to send brochures or other promotional or information literature.

APPENDIX 5

Among the reasons given for discontinuing library technology education programs were:

- no jobs locally;

- administration letting it [LMTA program] dry up on the vine;

- accept transfers to satisfy major requirements for the AA in library tech. ... There were not enough jobs in the greater Sacramento region for the three junior colleges to train people; so we opted to go inactive;

- we could no longer place students - nor could they find jobs on their own;

- cancelled due to lack of staff (due to Prop. 13);

- lack of interest and too few job placements;

- evaluating due to little job market for graduates. Proposition 13 brought it to a necessity;

- declining job market and overabundance of librarians in this area.

APPENDIX 6

Respondents suggestions and recommendations for program improvement:

- "There are four teachers always used and another six teachers brought in for special courses or added sections of a course."

- "LTA salaries in our area are often not above minimum wage. Several graduates who would like to work in libraries feel like they cannot give up their good secretarial jobs. We worry each semester about being able to enroll the minimum required for a class, but know our program fills a real need in the Panhandle area Public Libraries."

- "General beef, not related to Lib. Tech. program except in that school administrators are employers of Lib. Tech. grads, and they seldom know what to expect."

- "We all need to meet more often with personnel administrators."

- "Education degrees should include basic library administration & use orientation for teachers & for school administrators. Most make you wonder how they got through college, they understand so little about libraries."

- read "Training LTA's by Television" by Kay Buchanan, Oklahoma Librarian, April, 28:2, 1978, pp. 8-9.

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INTERVIEWS

Margaret Myers, Director, Office for Library Personnel Resources, American Library Association, Chicago. Telephone conversation, January 30, 1979.

ATTACHED

Publications available from the American Library Association's Council on Library Technical-Assistants.

PAMPHLETS

Library Education and Personnel Utilization. A Statement of Policy Adopted by the Council of the American Library Association, June 30, 1970.

Library Technical Assistant. Office for Recruitment, American Library Association, 50 E. Huron, Chicago, IL 60611

COUNCIL ON LIBRARY TECHNICAL-ASSISTANTS

PUBLICATIONS IN PRINT

Paraprofessional Library Employees (Career Information Pamphlet). 1977 $.25 each.

1976 Directory of Institutions Offering or Planning Programs for the Training of Library Technical Assistants. Edited by Richard L. Taylor. 1976. $7.00

The Role of the Professional Librarian in the Training of LTA's. Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Meeting, May 6-8, 1971. Edited by Dorothy Johnson. 1973. $4.00 ($5.25 outside the U.S.A.)

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